



A million sunflowers! | Page 13

August 6, 2026



A flooded basement.

Full scale of flood damage unknown

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Even before Niagara-on-the-Lake flooded a second time, the town had received 118 flood-related service requests but had no damage estimate or confirmed count of flooded basements.

Now, after two major storms in six days, the full toll remains unknown and possible provincial assistance has no dollar amount, eligibility rules or application process.

Five hours of rain brought 146.26 millimetres on July 28, hitting Virgil hardest. Five days later, localized totals topped 110 millimetres before the town had recovered.

After the first storm, staff were still investigating possible sewer backups, overflows and infrastructure failures and assessing the Cole, Harrison and Szockyj drains.

The town has not provided updated service-request or damage figures covering both floods.

It is tracking response costs and documenting damage to support potential disaster-recovery funding applications. It is also advocating for provincial financial help for residents,

Continued on Page 2

Flooded out

Legion forced to close, postpone events after foot of water hits club room



The NOTL Legion Branch 124 will be closed indefinitely until repairs can be made. While the cost is still unknown, the whole ground level was destroyed by more than a foot of water. Insurance should cover it, but there likely won't be a fish fry for a while. MEGAN VANDERLEE

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Sunday's deluge sent knee-deep floodwater through the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, destroying main-floor drywall, toppling freezers and damaging a century-old flag, photo albums and historical records.

"It was disbelief," said Megan Vanderlee, the Legion's first vice-president and bar chair, of the feeling at the Legion as the flooding took place.

The Legion was among the several homes, farms and businesses hit by two major storms that

flooded NOTL within six days.

Residents tore out soaked belongings and waited for restoration crews while confronting sharply different insurance realities — from confirmed full coverage to unanswered calls, a decision not to file a claim and one home-

owner being told her property was "blacklisted" from obtaining overland-flood protection.

One questioned whether his home was safe, while another grabbed a beer and tried to laugh

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Two floods could mean two claims — and higher rates for homeowners

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The water may be receding, but the cost of Niagara-on-the-Lake's back-to-back floods could follow some homeowners for years.

The town was still cleaning

up from the 146.26 millimetres of rain that fell July 28 when parts of NOTL received more than 110 millimetres Sunday, flooding some homes twice.

Jeff Wasiliw, an insurance adviser with BrokerLink, called it a double-edged sword: homeowners could have their damage covered but face two separate

claims, higher renewal rates and fewer coverage options.

"You're gonna get a nice surprise on your renewal."

Wasiliw said the storms would ordinarily count as two separate claims but questioned whether insurers might "show



Residents like Madis Tambre have lost everything in their basements. SUPPLIED

Continued on Page 14



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Damage is far reaching and claims average \$30,000

Continued from Front Page

businesses and farmers.

Acting Regional Chair Tom Insinna thanked Ontario for “stepping forward with urgently needed relief” in an Aug. 4 statement.

But Niagara Region later confirmed no specific assistance had been announced.

Insinna was referring to Premier Doug Ford’s public commitment that the province is working with affected Niagara municipalities, said Nick Colosimo, chief of staff in the regional chair’s office.

“Currently, the province has not announced specific funding amounts, eligibility requirements or an application process,” Colosimo said.

The region could not confirm what assistance will be available or whether it will apply to both NOTL floods.

Asked why NOTL had not declared a state of emergency, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa did not directly answer and instead pointed to the town’s public statements.

“It’s all in the release,” he said.

The town declared a Significant Weather Event

after the first flood, warning that some maintenance and response times could be reduced while staff prioritized cleanup. However, none of its flood-related statements addresses a state-of-emergency declaration or the lack thereof.

Coun. Maria Mavridis said on her Facebook account that, according to the town’s Emergency Control Group, declaring a state of emergency would not provide additional powers, funding or resources. She said one could still be declared if conditions change or a clear benefit emerges.

The region said regional and local infrastructure “performed as designed.” Separately, the town said it found and removed a temporary obstruction that significantly reduced flow through the King Street culvert during the second storm. Staff are investigating how it occurred and what role it played.

For now, residents are cleaning up while officials document the damage — and possible provincial assistance remains undefined.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Madis Tambre awoke to his basement flooded with about 5.5 feet of water, destroying everything in its path. He's one of hundreds of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents dealing with extensive damage caused by extreme flooding. SUPPLIED

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Heritage Festival gives public first look inside museum founder's historic home

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Rain and flooding across Niagara could not keep an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 visitors from the NOTL Museum's annual Heritage Festival on Monday, where the public got its first real look inside the former home of museum founder Janet Carnochan.

The free Civic Holiday festival filled Castlereagh Street with about 40 artisan, food and heritage vendors, live music, historic demonstrators and the museum's popular treasure sale, all beside an active \$10-million expansion project that has narrowed the grounds and left fresh sod soggy from the storms.

"With the weather the way that it was, it's amazing that so many people could come out and set up their booths because some people are dealing with a lot of damage right now," said festival organizer Gwen Anderson, the museum's educational program co-ordinator.

Crews filled a large excavation on the property just weeks before the event, so staff steered visitors off the wet lawn and onto the street, which the museum has closed for the festival for three years running.

Carnochan, a teacher who helped establish the NOTL Historical Society in 1895, built the house next to Memorial Hall, Ontario's first purpose-built museum. The museum bought the property in 2024 and finished rezoning it earlier this year, clearing the way for its



Visitors browse donated books during a sale inside the NOTL Museum. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

future life as a research and archives centre.

"This is the first year we've been able to really welcome people to the house and just give them a sense of what's here and what we're going to do with it," said executive director Amy Klassen.

The capital campaign has passed 65 per cent of its \$10-million target, said Klassen, and the museum plans to stay open through construction for as long as it can, though a temporary closure will likely become necessary during a later phase.

"Hopefully the community will be rallying behind us as we push to the finish line," she said.

Karen and Chris Travers represented the Canadian Volunteers, a re-enactment unit portraying Upper Canadians who fought for

the Americans during the War of 1812, set up near the United Empire Loyalists' Association booth, giving visitors both sides of Canada's divided past.

For a long time, that history stayed buried — it clashed with the idea that everyone rallied behind the king when war broke out, Karen Travers said.

"We were kind of history's dirty little secret, that there were some people who supported the Americans," she said.

Some backed the Americans because they seemed to be winning, she said, while others held more republican leanings. Many in the unit's history had been Loyalists themselves before switching sides, leaving family fighting family.

"History is complicated. People choose sides for different reasons at different

times," said Travers.

Volunteers spent more than a week and a half pricing donated treasures, while another group researched and priced books and paper items for the sale in Memorial Hall, storing some in their own homes before the big day.

"It would not be able to happen without the staff that we have, but especially without the volunteers," said Anderson.

Anderson, who ran the festival for the first time after Klassen moved into the executive director role, hopes it can one day grow into a town-wide heritage weekend with other local organizations.

The festival returns next Civic Holiday Monday, though construction will decide whether it can take over the street again.

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With the Toronto skyline providing a dramatic backdrop more than 50 kilometres in the distance, the “Moneypenny” from across the river in Youngstown, N.Y., slices through the choppy waves of Lake Ontario off Niagara-on-the-Lake. Boats from the NOTL Sailing Club and the Youngstown Yacht Club were participating in separate races on the lake last Wednesday evening. Photographer Dave van de Laar also captured a stunning sunset photo of the NOTL crew sailing “Trivial Pursuit” back to port from its races. **See it on Page 16.** DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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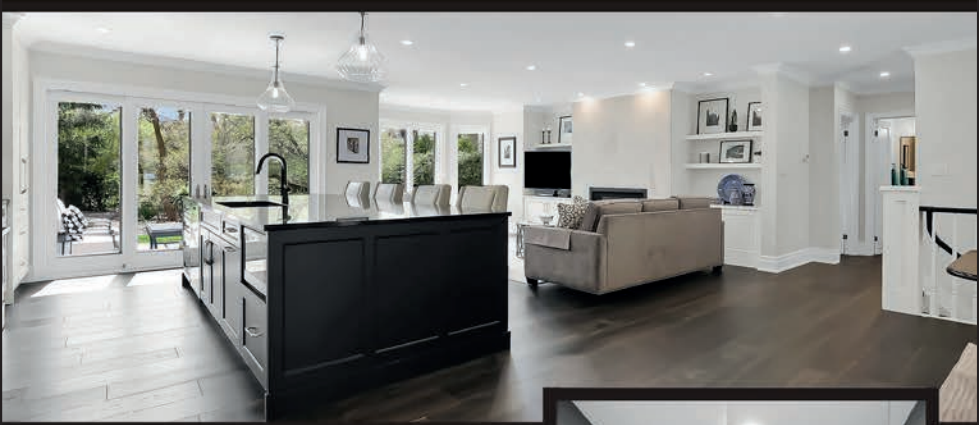
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Andrew Niven joins the council race

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Coun. Andrew Niven is running for Niagara-on-the-Lake council this fall, seeking voters' support for the first time since he was appointed to the role nearly two years ago.

Niven announced his candidacy Tuesday, saying he wants to continue the work he began after joining council in October 2024.

"It has been an incredible privilege to serve the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake," Niven said in a campaign statement.

"Over the past two years, I have approached every decision with one goal in mind: to do what is in the long-term best interest of our community. I am excited for the opportunity to continue that work."

Niven did not run in 2022. Councillors appointed him in October 2024 to fill the seat left vacant when Nick Ruller resigned.

He previously sought a council seat in 2018 but was not elected.

This year's election will give voters their first opportunity to decide whether Niven should remain at the council table.

Niven said his priorities include responsible government, transparent decisions, careful planning, fiscal responsibility and infra-



Andrew Niven. SUPPLIED

structure improvements. He also pledged to support agriculture and local businesses while protecting the town's character.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is unlike anywhere else," he said.

"We are fortunate to call home a community known around the world for its history, agriculture, wineries,

natural beauty, and vibrant neighbourhoods. As we continue to grow, we must ensure that every decision reflects our community's values while protecting the qualities that make this place so special."

Niven has worked in NOTL's tourism and wine sectors and has held leadership roles related to tourism,

business and economic development.

He is currently director of marketing and hospitality at Konzelmann Estate Winery and previously chaired the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL and Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He said local decisions should be based on evidence and public input.

"I don't believe leadership is about having all the answers," Niven said. "It's about listening, asking thoughtful questions, and making decisions based on facts — not politics. Residents deserve a council that is respectful, accountable, and focused on the future."

Niven said he plans to speak with residents about their priorities throughout the campaign.

"I have worked hard to be available, approachable, and engaged," he said. "Whether discussing planning, infrastructure, community services, or economic development, I have always believed that every resident deserves to be heard."

Council chose Niven during a closed-door meeting instead of holding a byelection or appointing Allan Bisback, the runner-up in the 2022 election. Councillors Gary Burroughs and Sandra O'Connor opposed Niven's appointment and favoured appointing Bisback.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Mavridis will seek re-election for 2026 term

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Since becoming a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake council four years ago, Maria Mavridis has taken it upon herself to deliver regular updates to the public on Facebook concerning events happening in town — including legal disputes, divisive development plans and explanations of how the municipality is run.

While it's not easy keeping an ongoing dialogue with the community, she says it's important to her that NOTL's residents have clear and accurate information about what's going on in the place they call home.

Mavridis, who was elected to council for the first time in 2022, is once again throwing her hat into the ring of this fall's election, hoping to serve another term.

The resident grew up in town. She and her family own and operate a handful



Maria Mavridis. SUPPLIED

of restaurants in downtown Old Town.

Since her term began, she said, she's been focused on being "as transparent as possible."

"I said that if I got elected, that I was going to share and make sure that everybody knows as much as I

know as councillor," she said, describing her stance during the 2022 campaign.

It hasn't been easy, she said: some of the negative comments and attacks she's received online and in-person have been hurtful.

Regardless, she said, if re-elected, she plans to

continue sharing everything she knows about the municipality's daily affairs, whether they're happening in council chambers or out in the neighbourhood.

"It's not right, but it's not going to stop me from sharing everything," she said.

As for what she hopes to accomplish from a governance standpoint, if re-elected, Mavridis said she wants to continue with the progress council made this term in updating its policies and bylaws — such as the special events bylaw passed in January that allows the town to fine organizers who host events that violate the town's rules.

"There's still half a dozen outdated policies and bylaws that I'd like to dig deep and look at and update," she said.

Mavridis is the fifth person to join the race for council, which will be made up of six members in the next term, down from eight.

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Peach festivals this weekend

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's peach festivals are back this weekend, giving residents and visitors one more chance to savour one of the season's signature fruits before summer begins to wind down.

With August underway and the days gradually growing shorter, the annual celebrations offer plenty of ways to make the most of the season while it's still here.

The final set of summer fruit festivals start Friday, with the NOTL Chamber of Commerce's Peach Festival on Friday and Saturday, followed by St. Vincent de Paul Parish's Peach Festival on Sunday.

Downtown Old Town will be a hive of activity on Friday, Aug. 7 from 12 to 7 p.m. and Saturday, Aug. 8 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Attendees can purchase baskets of peaches fresh from



Bring a bag and fill it up with delicious Niagara-on-the-Lake peaches this weekend. FILE

the farm and try a variety of peach-themed treats at booths set up all along Queen Street.

Alongside these two offerings, plus live music and educational exhibits and an appearance from Percy the peach mascot, the annual peach pie contest is set for Saturday at 11 a.m. in front of the old Courthouse.

Bakers, both amateur and professional, are encouraged to bring their peach

pies to be tasted by a panel of judges, which will decide which pie is a cut above the rest and select a winner.

For the kids, Simcoe Park will have a whole host of activities set up on Saturday at the Peach Keen kids zone, including face painting, crafts, swimming and a chance to learn more about the star of this weekend's grand affair, the peach itself.

On Sunday, Aug. 9, over at St. Vincent de Paul Par-

ish's church grounds, the celebration continues with peach-themed desserts for sale like crepes, sundaes, whole pies and pie slices, muffins and more, plus a pig roast/BBQ with corn, live music, a raffle with four prizes and tables for baking, jewelry, fresh peaches and a bazaar.

The church's festival will run from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. St. Vincent de Paul Parish is located at 73 Picton St.

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NOTL couple's home stars in Hollywood production

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

When Hollywood came knocking, Brodie and Maria Townley were ready for their close-up.

In June, crews filming the 20th Century Studios/ Disney romantic comedy “Beach Read” spent nearly a month in Niagara-on-the-Lake working on scenes for the film in several spots around town.

The project, which includes mega-star Kevin Bacon, features Phoebe Dynevor, who portrays a romance novelist, and Patrick Schwarzenegger, a college rival and literary fiction author she reconnects with following her father's death.

It also highlights the Townleys' heritage home at 123 Johnson St. and the house next door at 127, which is owned by Gary Weingandt and Dana Anderson.

But you might not recognize the Townleys' 1840s-era house when the



Brodie and Maria Townley stand on the temporary porch added to their Johnson Street home during filming of “Beach Read.” Maria holds a copy of the book on which the rom-com is based. SUPPLIED

movie hits the big screen next May.

Not only did the movie folks change the house from a soft yellow colour to a medium green tone, “but they added a veranda that wrapped around the house, plus they added an entire piece of a bump-out that went on the side of the house facing Gary's house,” Brodie Townley

said in an interview. Those additions were “entirely fake,” temporary renovations to fit the script. In fact, the Townley home got a big-screen touch-up more than once. “They'd actually painted about three-quarters of the house a darkish green and the director (Yulin Kuang) came by and said, ‘Nope, too dark. Repaint it,’ ” Townley

recalled. So they did. They also did tweaked the interior décor.

“An entire painting team comes in to paint the inside of the house and the outside of the house. So, we got to know all those people pretty well because we were going in and out of the house getting stuff.”

When shooting is complete, you have the option to keep the paint and décor changes. Or they'll restore it to your original look. The Townleys chose the latter.

And in a small bit of movie magic, they got to know one of the film's producers, Whitney Brown.

“She's from NOTL and, funnily enough, her mother used to own our house. (Whitney) actually grew up in our house.”

The whole Hollywood takeover began several months back when location scouts knocked on their door, Townley said.

“They wanted two houses beside each other that looked like they're cottages

because the movie's actually set on Lake Michigan.”

“Our house and Gary's house next door fit the bill. I know they spoke to at least two other people who just decided they didn't want to do it for whatever reason.”

Once that was done, they negotiated a rental fee and waited for the crew to descend in June. When they had to move out, the Townleys house-sat in Garrison for friends who were away.

The entire experience was smooth and seamless, he said.

“The movie people were fabulous, very, very nice, polite, always willing to help you out and happy to have you come in the house and see what was going on,” he said.

On one of the shooting days, he even got to sit in the director's chair and watch the crew at work.

When the stars show up to shoot, they get right to work. No time is wasted.

So, while Townley caught a brief glimpse of Bacon on-

set, there was no fraternizing with the talent.

“They're there to work.” While the movie, which also is being filmed in Toronto and other locations, was using the working title “Happily Ever After,” Townley said he was told it will be called “Beach Read,” after the novel it is based on.

The whole process of seeing the creative process up close was a bit of an eye-opener for the retired banker.

“Now every time that I look at a look at a close-up scene between people, I'll know there's like eight people standing within two feet of them” as the camera rolls.

Townley said he and Maria would be happy to do it again if Hollywood comes calling.

As for whether he plans to go see they rom-com when it comes out next spring, he is unequivocal.

“Absolutely, I look forward to it.”



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Embrace your inner child with ‘The Wind in the Willows’

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

(out of five)

Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, 2 hours, one intermission. Ends Sept. 27. Based on the play “Toad of Toad Hall” by A. A. Milne. Adapted and directed by Fiona Sauder.

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

Indulge the child within you. This joyous production is for all ages and it was pure delight to see children on the edge of their seats, parents and grandparents alert, all responding and laughing in anticipation of what was coming. They knew the characters and the story. And for those, like me, who did not have “The Wind in the Willows” read to them as children, it was a wonderful revelation and great fun.

Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad are the friends we can relate to and treasure. In them, we can see ourselves and others we know with all their fears, foibles, failures, extravagances and triumphs. Lives being lived and shared in a spirit of adventure, kindness and generosity.

This production is a new adaptation by Fiona Sauder of the play “Toad of Toad Hall” by A.A. Milne of “Winnie the Pooh” fame. Milne’s play was based on Kenneth Grahame’s revered novel “The Wind in the Willows” published in 1908 and created to amuse his

son, Alastair, at bedtime.

It was also meant to teach manners and the differences between right and wrong and loyalty and betrayal. This outstanding cast and production crew, working with Sauder, has created a nonstop action wonder.

Sharry Flett brilliantly captures every nuance of the clever, responsible, sensitive poet and composer, Ratty. Shawn Wright is excellent as Mr. Badger, the wise father figure, who must counsel and save Toad from himself. A recluse, Badger likes people, is loyal to his friends but prefers not to be involved with society.

The shy and sensible Mole discovers a new above ground world of sun, breezes and water. He is played by the ever one-note Gabriella Sundar Singh. Lawrence Libor as the crazed, rich playboy, Toad, is hyper, frenetic, compulsive, boastful, anti-authority, addicted to new fads and taking risks, yet considerate, affectionate and generous to his friends.

The plot is us vs. them. The River Bankers, which include the water rats, don’t often go to the scary Wild Wood as it is the home of untrustworthy weasels, stoats, ferrets and foxes.

As Toad has inherited Toad Hall, the finest house on the river, he is now the Honourable, Venerable Mr. Toad and the rightful leader of the region. But his wayward behaviour jeopardizes his inheritance and reputation and the Chief Weasel lies in



Gabriella Sundar Singh as Mole in “The Wind in the Willows.” MICHAEL COOPER

wait for the opportunity to capture Toad Hall.

Oblivious to this impending danger, Toad follows his latest passion, taking to the open road with Ratty and Mole in his new, bright-yellow caravan drawn by his old horse, Alfred. A new motor car whizzes by sounding its “poop poop” horn. Alfred rears, the caravan rolls over and is wrecked. Toad doesn’t care. He now has a new obsession: motor cars.

He crashes seven cars, is arrested for stealing the eighth, for endangering the public and insulting the police. Brought before the judge and a jury of six rabbits, one of whom is the Chief Weasel stating he is a different sort of rabbit, Toad is found guilty and given

20 years in jail. He escapes, dressed as a washerwoman, with the help of the jailer’s sympathetic daughter.

In Toad’s absence, Toad Hall has been taken over by the Weasels, Stoats and Ferrets. Badger, Ratty, Mole and the returned Toad devise a plan to take back Toad Hall by force. A blog of Angry Staff Officer February 2017, states the Battle for Toad Hall is “A Masterpiece of Asymmetrical Warfare,” meaning small-unit warfare. The Weasels are a garrison force within the Hall, the Stoats a sentry force patrolling the main approach.

Badger is a strike force commander who lays out a sound strategy of engagement. Rat oversees the combat load of arms. They ap-

proach the Hall by a hidden underground tunnel. Their superior use of intelligence and fighting ability surprise the Chief Weasel’s birthday party. They win the battle. Toad Hall is reclaimed by Toad, who promises to do better.

Was Toad Hall Russell Grahame’s allegory for the state of England in 1908? A view that the social order of the upper class was threatened by its folly, exposing it to danger by the working class, a danger recognized by the bourgeois intelligentsia represented by Badger, Rat and Mole?

In 1908, some relevant legislation occurred. The Passage of Children Act granted authorities the right to take away custody of their children from inebr-

ated parents. There was also the 1908 official inquiry into the Inebriates Act.

Russell Grahame’s mother died when he was five. His father, Cunningham Grahame, had an uncontrollable drinking addiction. Russell was sent to live with relatives whose country house “The Mount” overlooked the Thames River in Cookham Dean, Berkshire.

In Cookham, Lullebrook Manor was rented by Francis Court Ricardo, a colonel in the Grenadier Guards and a brother of the Duchess of Richmond. A larger-than-life character, he was the first in the village to own a motor car. It was a bright yellow Rolls Royce with a large horn on the side that went “poop poop.” Other Toad Hall possibilities overlooking the Thames were Mapledurham House and Hardwick House in Oxfordshire.

Whatever the background stories, plays and many revivals, this combination of superb ensemble acting, Judith Bowden’s imaginative sets and props, costumes designed by Laura Delchiaro suggesting the original drawings of E.H. Shepard, Kevin Lamotte’s lighting, Jeff Newberry’s sounds of birds overhead and spooky whistling in the dark woods, Jack Davidson’s fight choreography and Fiona Sauder’s clear collaborative vision has resulted in a sparkling success.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Tornado warnings, heavy rain cut Art at the Pumphouse short

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Thunderstorms rolled over the Niagara Pumpphouse Arts Centre around 11 a.m. Sunday, forcing Art at the Pumpphouse to close hours early and cancelling a full afternoon of demonstrations, live music and in-person sales.

The juried show and sale, one of the Pumpphouse’s major fundraisers, opened to a steady flow of visitors all day Saturday, said Rima Boles, director of the arts centre. Sunday’s storms and the tornado warnings that followed left artists a narrow window to pack up and get their work out of the rain.

Staff and volunteers moved artists and visitors inside the Ricardo Street centre when the first storm



Lillian Pasqua gives a watercolor demonstration inside the Pumpphouse. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

hit, said Boles. Once the weather made it unsafe to continue, the Pumpphouse announced the show would close for the day.

“The break between storms allowed artists to pack up their art and tents safely before the tornado

warnings,” she said.

Most exhibitors secured their artwork and tents before conditions worsened, she said. One booth fared worse.

“Unfortunately there was one tent that leaked from the heavy rainfall and the

artist had to quickly secure their artworks inside the Pumpphouse,” said Boles.

Artists and visitors were disappointed when the closure was announced, she said, but understood the decision given the extreme weather.

The closure cancelled Rob Dorante’s pottery wheel demonstration, Chris Lizsak’s wet-felting demonstration, afternoon sets by musicians Selena Carlson and Bruce Tournay and a three-hour circus performance by the troupe Femmes de Feu.

On Saturday, artist Aidan Frenette drew a crowd of onlookers as he demonstrated photo emulsion lifts, a technique that peels the image layer from a Polaroid photo and transfers it to a new surface, said Boles. Artist Sarah Beara painted free portraits of visitors’ dogs, an addition to the pet-friendly festival this year.

Four Niagara artists exhibited at the Pumpphouse for the first time: St. Catharines acrylic painter Peggy Brennan, St. Catharines photographer Laurie J. Mor-

ison, Welland watercolour artist Lillian Pasqua and Lincoln mixed-media artist Dorothy Vandersteen.

Boles said she had not yet heard back from the first-time exhibitors about their weekend. She did not share attendance totals, sales figures or fundraising results.

“A juried art show ensures visitors experience a high calibre of work from talented artists, but what makes it truly special is the opportunity to meet those artists in person, hear the stories behind their work, and build a personal connection,” said Boles.

Anyone who missed the weekend can still view and buy the exhibitors’ work at artatthepumpphouse.ca until Sunday, Aug. 9, where each artist has a page and sells directly to buyers.

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18-year-old to run marathon around lake

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

A Niagara-based long-distance runner is lacing up his shoes for an ultra-marathon that'll see him run along Lake Ontario from Niagara-on-the-Lake to the Thousand Islands — 886 kilometres in 21 days.

Adam Saltarelli, 18 years old from Port Colborne, is kicking off his run on Saturday morning, Aug. 8, setting off from the Waterfront Trail under the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge.

He plans to complete the ultra-marathon as a series of half-marathons, each 21 kilometres long, along the coast of Lake Ontario.

With a few days to go before the big run kicks off, Saltarelli says he's feeling "excellent" and ready to go.

"My body feels better than ever. I'd probably say I'm in the best shape of my life, which helps out a lot," he said.

The total distance, 886 kilometres, is about 134



Adam Saltarelli. SUPPLIED

kilometres short of Lake Ontario's shoreline length, 1,020 kilometres (which excludes its islands).

Originally, he hoped to run around the entire lake, which would've included crossing the border to and from the United States, but he says he was unable to make it happen due to logistical problems.

Instead, his process will be as follows: begin each day at a marked point, point A; run 21 kilometres to

point B, marking the exact spot; turn around and run back to point A; drive in a car to point B, park for the night, then set off the next day on another 21 kilometres toward his next point, repeating the process until he reaches the 1000 Islands Tower on Hill Island.

The past few years, Saltarelli has begun testing his limits as a runner, trying to see how far he can go. Two years ago, he ran his first marathon, the Niagara Falls International Marathon. After finishing it, he decided he wanted to try and run a 100-mile race before he turned 18 — he completed one a month before his 18th birthday.

"I've always been drawn to how far you can run," he said. "Hearing [about] some people running across the country ... what does that person know that I don't about pushing my body? It's always been, kind of, a curious question."

For him, this ultra-marathon, which he's calling

the LO550 (the run is 550 miles), is the next step in his evolution as a runner.

Saltarelli is hoping to raise money for Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, which aims to remove financial barriers to children and youth accessing sports by co-creating athletic programs and supporting local sports organizations.

"Sports, they're wonderful. They've really made me into the person I am today," he said. "Any way I can give back funding to that, then I'll throw every cent that I got at you."

His goal is to raise \$5,550 by the end of the run, which he's expecting to finish Aug. 29.

The LO500 run begins at 9 a.m. on the Niagara River Recreational Trail underneath the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge in Queenston. Those interested in supporting the run, either through a donation or by sponsoring a mile, can visit lo550.com.

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Former German leader Merkel visits

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club played host to a special guest last week, when former German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited for dinner.

Merkel and her family were on a private holiday to Niagara and the German embassy had arranged in advance with NOTL's Klaus Reif for her to visit the Reif Estate Winery for a tour and tasting.

She arrived at the winery right after a visit to Niagara Falls, said club co-owner Eva Kessel.

"With her hair still damp from the mist, she was gracious, genuine and completely unconcerned about appearances," Kessel said in the club newsletter.

At the golf club, "she was captivated by the beauty of the property."

During her political career, Merkel was known for shunning a lavish lifestyle,



NOTL Golf Club co-owner Eva Kessel, left, welcomes former German chancellor Angela Merkel to the club during Merkel's visit to Niagara last week. KLAUS REIF

living in a small apartment and doing her own grocery shopping.

Because Merkel, 72, was on a family vacation (along with a security detail), her visit wasn't publicized in advance, Kessel said.

Meanwhile, on the course this past week, not much

golf was played. Flooding due to the heavy weekend rains kept the course closed from Sunday through Tuesday.

Only last Thursday's men's league managed to complete play and it featured a stellar round by Mark Derbyshire.

The 70-year-old, who won 30 club championships in a row starting in 1976, carded a 2-under 34, with birdies on holes 2, 3 and 8, and a bogey on #5.

While he won't be playing in the annual club championship tournament this weekend, he will be there Sunday to hand out some of the hardware.

Jim Meszaros also had a great round, winning second low gross with 37 and closest to the pin on #9, while Greg Fedoryn and Derbyshire both had low net scores of 30.

Other top shooters were: Matt Hurlburt (longest drive on #1), Paul Loucks (closest to the pin on #4) and John Reynolds (longest putt made on #8).

Jeff Jacques eagled the par-5 fifth hole, cashing in big time as her earned a \$110 gross skin and \$285 net skin. Other gross skins: Al Kavanagh (birdie #1) and Ricky Watson (birdie #4). Net skin: Derek Merza (#3).



NOTL Soccer Club president Julia Friesen, centre, is surrounded by some of the coaches and volunteers. SUPPLIED

Soccer club celebrates coaches and volunteers

Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club celebrated the association's many coaches and volunteers with a special dinner at Barrelhead at Pillitteri Estates Winery.

It's the club's way to

thank volunteers "for the incredible time, energy and dedication" they contribute, said president Julia Friesen.

"We truly couldn't do it without our amazing volunteers and it was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate another great season of soccer together."

The club also welcomed special guest Jim Douglas, former captain of Canada's men's national team.

He represented Canada internationally for many years and "has made significant contributions to the growth of soccer in Canada, both on and off the field,"

Friesen said.

"We were fortunate to have him join us to share his experiences, insights and passion for the game," she added.

Douglas has a strong NOTL connection as his granddaughter Stella plays on the club's Timbits Green team.

Two names added to NOTL Sports Wall of Fame

Staff
The Lake Report

Two local sports leaders will be honoured later this month as the newest inductees into Niagara-on-the-Lake's Sports Wall of Fame.

The town is inducting Gary Friesen and Kurt Hamm into its Sports Wall of Fame at the Meridian Credit Union Arena in Virgil and will honour them at a ceremony on Friday, Aug. 21.

Friesen played hockey

for the Oshawa Generals, Sudbury Wolves and Brock Badgers and lacrosse for the Niagara Thunderhawks.

He achieved success at the junior and provincial levels before coming back to NOTL to work as a coach, mentor and volunteer.

Hamm, meanwhile, has spent the last 40 years coaching youth soccer and supporting community sport.

The ceremony begins at 5 p.m., with a reception to follow. The Meridian Credit Union Arena is located at 1567 Four Mile Creek Rd.



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Kinsmen car show rolls in Sunday

Staff
The Lake Report

Chrome, horsepower and decades of automotive history will fill the grounds around the Kinsmen Scout Hall this weekend as one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's largest annual car shows returns.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Kinsmen Club will host its 26th annual Show and Shine on Sunday, Aug. 9, in partnership with Parks Canada.

The show runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Kinsmen Scout Hall, 430 King St., at the corner of King and Mary streets.

All cars are welcome, from carefully restored classics and vintage pickups to hot rods, custom builds and newer specialty vehicles.

There is no advance registration. Owners can simply arrive at the gate between 8 a.m. and noon and pay the \$10 vehicle entry fee. Organizers say the site has room



All cars are welcome to the show and can register at the gate. The entry fee for vehicles is \$10. FILE

for more than 500 vehicles, with the show typically attracting between 350 and 400 entries.

Admission for spectators is \$5, while children younger than 12 enter free. The event is cash only.

Along with rows of polished vehicles, the day will include a barbecue serving back-bacon burgers, hamburgers and hotdogs, a beer tent, a 50/50 draw and commemorative Show and Shine T-shirts.

The show is the club's largest annual fundraiser, with proceeds supporting its community projects and national charitable causes, most notably Cystic Fibrosis Canada.

Money raised by the Kinsmen helps support local groups and programs, including youth organizations and community sports. The club has supported cystic fibrosis research since its early years and, as of last summer, had contributed an estimated \$60,000 to \$70,000 toward the cause since 1970.

Last year's 25th anniversary show attracted 381 registered vehicles and more than 1,500 visitors, including car owners from across Niagara, the Greater Toronto Area and the United States.

The annual gathering is traditionally held on the second Sunday of August and gives enthusiasts a chance to display their prized vehicles while visitors get an up-close look at cars rarely seen on the road.

For more information, call Harold at 905-262-4175.



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What do a million sunflowers look like? Find out and help school kids this weekend

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Whether it's in the kitchen, on his farm or around his backyard, Ryan Crawford is always cooking up something unique.

This time, he has planted an estimated one million sunflowers on his property — and he wants to use them to help send children to school.

On Saturday and Sunday, Crawford will open his farm to visitors who want to walk among the flowers, take selfies, sip lemonade and bring home a little sunshine, all while raising money for Royal Oak Community School.

The event, at 104 Niagara St., runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days, with a rain date of Saturday, Aug. 15.

"We grew sunflowers to brighten up everybody's day," Crawford said.

He initially had no intention of allowing people to



Ryan Crawford estimates he has about 1 million sunflowers on his Niagara Street farm. You can see them this weekend and raise money for Royal Oak School. RICHARD HARLEY

wander through the farm. But when the opportunity arose to support Royal Oak, a non-profit community school, Crawford decided the field was too special not to share.

"We planted two million seeds. We probably have a million growing, and it looks spectacular," he said.

Crawford has cut paths through the sprawling field, allowing visitors to walk among the towering yellow flowers and find the perfect spot for a photograph.

"You can walk amongst the sunshine, take a picture, enjoy a glass of lemonade and bring a sunflower home," he said.

Betty Lou Photography will also set up a photo booth at the farm, while lemonade and iced tea will be available for purchase.

Admission is \$15 per person or \$50 for a family of up to six people. Individual admission includes one sunflower, while each family will receive a bouquet.

Additional sunflowers will also be available for purchase.

All admission proceeds will support Royal Oak Community School and its efforts to provide financial assistance to families, helping ensure any child who wants to attend has the opportunity to do so.

Crawford hopes the weekend will allow people to enjoy something beautiful while raising as much money as possible for the school.

"When life gives you sunflowers, you make sunshine."

editor@niagaranow.com

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Brokers face hundreds of claims

Continued from Front Page

that we have a heart” by treating them as one.

The Lake Report contacted three local insurance brokerages after the first storm to understand the number and cost of claims, what water coverage means and how residents should respond. Wasiliw was interviewed again after Sunday’s storm about the possible consequences of flooding twice.

Brokers help clients find coverage from insurance companies and assist policyholders when they make claims. But Wasiliw stressed that insurers, not brokers, will decide how the two storms are treated.

CAA Insurance and Intact Insurance were contacted for details on how they would handle claims from the back-to-back storms but did not respond by publication time.

Wasiliw has not yet heard of a homeowner being told

to submit two claims for damage from both storms.

“Not yet, but they’re also not really saying,” he said.

Wasiliw said insurers were first focused on clearing the backlog, cleaning homes and getting immediate help to policyholders.

But he said claim history can affect more than a homeowner’s next bill.

“If you were to try to go somewhere else, if you have a couple claims within, say, three years — usually three to five — well, you’re high risk,” he said. “So you don’t really have many options.”

“That’s kind of the biggest thing right now,” said Wasiliw.

He estimated that BrokerLink’s Niagara Falls office, which also serves its former NOTL office’s clients, received more than 200 flood-related claims. He estimated close to half came from NOTL and said the St. Catharines office likely received about twice as many.

Wasiliw said BrokerLink received slightly fewer claims after Sunday’s storm than after the first flood.

An insurance adviser with Hope & Harder Insurance Brokers estimated that brokerage also received about 200 claims from NOTL and 300 from St. Catharines.

Reimer Verge Insurance Brokers reported receiving “hundreds” of flood-related calls and claims after the first storm but did not provide an exact figure. A local Desjardins Insurance agent was also contacted but did not respond by publication time.

“It was nonstop phone calls,” the Hope & Harder adviser said.

“It was really difficult just to keep up with reporting the claims, taking the calls.”

The adviser called it “one of the worst floods we’ve ever had” and estimated an average basement claim would cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

Wasiliw said one relative’s basement claim in NOTL reached \$40,000 for damage to carpet, underpadding and drywall.

An adjuster arrived at that home at 9:30 a.m. carrying a list of 112 people to visit that day.

“Let’s say he does, maybe, 25 or 30 in a day, but then the next day he’s probably going to have another 200 on his list,” said Wasiliw.

“This has never really happened, I don’t think.”

Whether flood damage is covered depends on the policy and how the water entered the home, Wasiliw said.

“If they don’t have the coverage, I mean, they don’t have the coverage,” he said. “There’s nothing that can really be done.”

Coverage can differ depending on whether water flowed across the ground, backed up through a sewer or drain, or entered through the foundation, he said.

The value of a claim also



Floodwater pools across the front yards of Niagara-on-the-Lake homes after heavy rainfall. The town’s back-to-back storms could result in separate insurance claims for some homeowners. JANET O’BRIEN

depends on how the basement was finished and what belongings were damaged.

“Every insurance company, they’re going to have a different risk appetite,” Wasiliw said, adding that some insurance companies may not offer certain water coverage in locations they consider at higher risk.

For now, Wasiliw said insurers were still adding water coverage to new policies and he had not seen rates immediately spike following the storms.

“It’s exactly the same as of right now,” he said.

But residents should not wait for an adjuster or restoration company before beginning urgent cleanup and Wasiliw said residents should record what they clean, remove or discard so they can later explain the work to an adjuster.

“Don’t wait for someone to come. Start cleaning up,” he said. “Go as quick as you can.”

The long-term insurance impact will not be clear until insurers decide how they will handle the two storms.

“Now, there’s just more to the list,” Wasiliw said.

“It’s really coming down to what’s going to happen and how insurance companies are going to be looking at this after the fact.”

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Blocked culvert led to massive flooding at Legion

Continued from Front Page

through the cleanup.

The Legion's insurance policy appears to cover the damage, but every August event it had scheduled has been cancelled. There is no reopening date and Vanderlee said it could take three months or longer, particularly with restoration companies handling widespread damage across town.

On Tuesday, the town said it removed a temporary obstruction that significantly reduced flow through the King Street culvert during Sunday's storm. The culvert remained structurally sound, but staff are investigating how the obstruction occurred and its role in the flooding.

At Branch 124 — which sits at 410 King St. — the water has since receded, but the damage remains, Vanderlee said.

A roughly 100-year-old flag was water-damaged, along with photo albums, paperwork and some of the organization's extensive paper records. Electrical equipment and a newly installed furnace are also among the losses.

The flooding has forced the Legion to cancel all its events this month, including its fish fry, food-truck nights, musical performances and a large outdoor party that was planned for Monday. Vanderlee said the loss extends beyond the building.

Vendors will lose revenue, residents will lose regular events and members will temporarily lose a place many consider a second home.

"We're gonna do our best to get up and running as fast as we can, but that's out of our control," she said.

Municipal and hydro workers were already responding when Vanderlee arrived around 6:30 a.m. Monday and had reportedly worked through the night, she said.

As word of the damage spread, volunteers rushed to the Legion.

"So many volunteers showed up to help. It was amazing," Vanderlee said, adding that members eventually had to stop them because there was nothing more they could safely touch until professionals assessed the building.

But despite the damage, Vanderlee said no one was hurt and members had not lost their homes or personal possessions, as many residents had.



Left: A line on the wall shows how high the water got, leading to about a foot of water inside the building. RICHARD HARLEY Right: Water flows through the Legion Branch 124. Among many losses are drywall, freezers, the new furnace and historic artifacts, photos and documents. MEGAN VANDERLEE



On Firelane 13, Rene Flear said Desjardins Insurance informed her and her husband that their property is "blacklisted" from obtaining overland flood insurance because of its location.

Desjardins would not discuss Flear's individual policy, citing client privacy, but said it does not use that terminology.

"Desjardins does not use the term 'blacklisted' to describe properties that are ineligible for overland flood coverage," said Maria Benjamins, vice-president of corporate underwriting and coverages with Desjardins General Insurance Group, in an email to The Lake Report.

Eligibility is determined using several factors, Benjamins said: a property's characteristics, location and exposure to flood risk, and that clients are informed about available coverage and any exclusions or limitations while receiving a quote, buying their insurance and through their policy documents.

Flear said the insurer told them that limitation was disclosed when they bought the policy, but said she does not specifically recall being told the coverage was unavailable. But she said she now understands it is not offered for properties in the area.

The couple has since added sewer-backup coverage in case their septic system backs up.

"I do not believe it is fair that insurance companies can deny flood coverage to homeowners in certain areas while still charging significant premiums," Flear said.

"We have paid insurance for many years, and despite paying considerably more than we did for homes we owned in other cities, we

are still unable to obtain this important coverage."

Ralph Rickard was assured his losses would be fully covered, but his finished basement remains soaked and he does not know whether his home is safe.

"If you can't laugh at it or find some humour in it, then you're going to get depressed. So grin and bear it and clean up as much as you can and carry on."

MADIS TAMBRE
FLOOD VICTIM

Rickard woke after the first storm to a neighbour's text asking whether he had flooded. He checked downstairs and found two to three inches of what he believed was sewage and water.

He filed a claim that day and said his insurer confirmed full coverage. A restoration project manager inspected the home Saturday and an electrician found no exposed electrical issues Monday.

But no cleanup crew had arrived.

He said his greatest concern is whether the wet carpet and lingering smell have made the home unsafe and that he wants the air tested before deciding whether he and his wife should remain in their bungalow.

"I don't know if we should be staying in our home here or not."

Rickard said he cannot smell the odour well himself because of his old age — "I don't have a very acute smell" — but visitors have noticed it.

He used a shop vac and

washed the basement himself because he did not want sewage sitting inside his home.

Water had climbed about a foot-and-a-half up the drywall. Rickard said he was told workers would need to remove its bottom two feet.

The carpeting, bathroom vanity, doors, sofas, chairs and other belongings that absorbed water or odour will likely have to go too, he said.

Madis Tambre was also doing the work himself, but was waiting to learn what his insurer would cover.

There are 13 steps leading to Tambre's basement floor. After floodwater poured into his home last week, only five remained above water.

Floodwater rose at least 69 inches — more than five-and-a-half feet — through his home, swallowing furniture, electronics, clothing and even a pump needed to drain it.

"I understand that they're probably overwhelmed with calls, but it would have been nice to get the water pumped out in a day rather than over five days or four days that it took me," Tambre said.

He spent about an hour "to get somewhere" with CAA, but said no adjuster had called or visited by Tuesday.

Tambre said the conversation left him hopeful that CAA might pay his coverage limit, minus the deductible. He was waiting for confirmation before tearing out damaged insulation.

While waiting, he sprayed mould killer on the damaged insulation.

His couch, chairs, sewing machine, television, entertainment unit and winter clothing are among the expected losses.

Tambre called it "forced decluttering."

"I guess there was initial shock," he said. "Then you have to [say], 'OK, it happened. Life doesn't always go your way. Have a beer and think about it.'"

A sense of humour, he said, is helping him push forward.

"If you can't laugh at it or find some humour in it, then you're going to get depressed," Tambre said. "So grin and bear it and clean up as much as you can and carry on."

At 1289 Larkin Rd., Shawn Comfort had six sump pumps running around the clock during the first storm. They could not keep up.

Three inches of water spread across his basement, while about six inches covered his shop driveway.

"There was nothing I could do but sit there and watch it flood because I couldn't pump it fast enough," Comfort said. "I had nowhere to pump it to."

During the second storm, Comfort ran four sump pumps but said he had nowhere to send the water because town and regional drainage systems were not moving it away "fast enough."

He and his parents cleaned up the damage themselves. Comfort chose not to make an insurance claim, saying immediate cleanup was necessary to prevent mould and mildew from setting in while he waited for assistance.

"The thing you have to do when you're in this situation is get rid of the water as quickly as possible and start drying it out," he said.

Comfort said his household has not made a claim since moving there, but its annual insurance cost rose by about \$2,000 last year.

"If you think your house insurance isn't going up, newsflash," he said. "The

insurance companies have now rendered the whole area a flood concern."

On Colonel Butler Crescent, Sue-Ann Ramsden's home flooded for the second time while restoration equipment from the first flood was still running.

Hoses stretched across the floors and into sinks changed where the water travelled Sunday. Ramsden said neighbours whose homes already received new materials were less fortunate.

Her restoration company is handling five NOTL homes that flooded again. Ramsden is still awaiting an assessment to determine what can be saved, restored or written off.

"A learning curve I would have preferred to have done without," she said.

The second storm also hit Vaughn and Lauren Goetler's farm harder than the first.

At 2:30 a.m., Vaughn and three others again moved four frightened sheep into a safer barn, while two goats were placed with the pigs.

"They get along so they can stay together for the night," Lauren said.

But this time, water also entered the farmhouse — "a double whammy," she said.

The town has directed residents with flood damage to contact their insurance providers and posted recovery information and available supports on its website.

FLOOD RELIEF:
Waste drop-off site open

After heavy rain caused widespread flooding across Niagara-on-the-Lake, the town is opening a temporary drop-off site for flood-damaged waste.

Residents can bring eligible materials to the town operations yard at 1565 Four Mile Creek Rd. from Aug. 6 to 8. The site will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

"Providing a temporary location for flood-damaged waste will help affected residents move forward with cleanup and recovery," Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said in a media release. "We appreciate the community's patience and co-operation as staff work to operate the site safely and efficiently."

The site will accept non-hazardous household items damaged by flooding, including furniture, carpeting and underpadding, drywall, building materials, household contents and some non-refrigerated appliances.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



Publisher: Richard Harley
Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley
Managing Editor: Zahraa Hmood
Editor Emeritus: Kevin MacLean
Design & Layout: Richard Harley
Advertising: Megan Vanderlee
Contributors: Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Patty Garriock, Maddy Gordon, Steve Hardaker, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, and many more members of the NOTL community.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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Homeward bound



As sunset looms, the shark-class sailboat “Trivial Pursuit” heads home at the end of last Wednesday evening’s races for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club. This 24-footer is owned by the Bradford-Andrew triplets from NOTL (Owen, Jamie and Ben) and is crewed by Owen, Jamie and pal Seth Van der Zalm. The brothers, aged 20, have owned the “Trivial Pursuit” since they were 14. Owen and Jamie are both sailing instructors with the NOTL club. “Sailing is an amazing sport to get into, especially for youth,” says Owen, who heads up the NOTL club’s junior sailing program. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

After the big storm, the big flush



THE TURNER REPORT
Garth Turner
Columnist

It rained. Then it rained. Following that, it rained. Then the floods.

“Never seen anything like this in thirty years,” said mechanical contractor Dan Plomish said. “Even the strongest sump pumps were being overwhelmed.”

The deluge left a little more than 6.5 feet of water in the giant, massive, acres-big hole soon to be full of Porsches and Rovers. The underground parking garage of the Parliament Oak hotel contained tens of thousands of gallons — all of it pumped out and into NOTL’s sanitary sewer system, atop the usual 47,000-gallon-per-day flow from the pit.

That pumping may have been illegal. And your basement may have paid the price.

“We hear some people already had trouble flushing their toilets as a result,” residents’ association director Ron Simkus told me. “This water issue is huge. What are the next steps for impacted NOTL households with basements full of sewage?”

So why would a major construction site digging far below the water table

be allowed to send its own mighty river into the municipal system? “Because council allowed it,” he adds. “For three years while they build the hotel.”

There’s more to the story. It’s troubling. Digging for the 248-car subterranean garage has included illegal diversion of water into One Mile Creek.

Locals are worried the dig will permanently alter groundwater levels, leading to chronic flooding of homes (and defeated sump pumps). Others argue all the water being collected and flushed away will starve the giant trees that make the hood unique.

Dewatering is a big deal. The NOTL Residents Association met with town officials this week to get some answers. None were forthcoming. It turns out nobody is monitoring the flow.

“This deliberate co-mining of a massive volume of stormwater into a highly vulnerable sanitary system is deliberate, inconsiderate, destructive to the lives of many NOTL residents,” says Simkus. “Now, during these ‘epic’ rain events recently, sewer backups across Virgil and Old Town and hundreds of residents are being impacted, often for the very first time in history.”

But Parliament Oak is not the only massive new pipe into the sewer system. The Shaw is also part of the Big Flush. Its Royal George site has permission to dump 225,000 litres (or 59,000 gallons) of water into the sanitary sewer every day.

How much water is that?



Leslie Mann.

This one site’s flow equates to the daily usage of 330 homes — 62 per cent of all the households in the heritage district.

So it begs the same question: was our town infrastructure built for this? Did the political leaders debate it? Was it disclosed?

“The idea that multiple high-volume discharge permits can be granted simultaneously, if at all, is very disturbing,” says Simkus. “Permits are cheap and fast but transfer substantial risk to someone else — local residents and taxpayers.”

In the same vein, why are there no models of either the 35,000-square-foot hotel or the 51,000-square-foot George complex?

At 62 feet in height, the hotel (capable of holding 1,000 people) will tower over the existing residential hood, while the new theatre soars to six storeys on a street of largely one- or two-level heritage buildings.

Do citizens or their leaders really know what’s coming?

St. Davids resident Leslie Mann has created models of new developments for more than four decades.

“As we all know, a rendering can be manipulated,” he says, “whereas an accurate model tells all. None of the recent controversial projects

have presented a model to showcase their designs. I think we know why.”

“If the Shaw group believes their design integrates well with Old Town why not show us?” he continues. “What are they hiding? If the Marotta architect believes their design for Parliament Oak meshes with the existing streetscape, why not produce a concept model covering a few blocks surrounding the site? Let people see.”

Mann says he’s been tempted to make those models, take them to councillors and say, “Look, are you aware this is what they want to build?”

The answer, at this point, seems to be a hard no. Nobody really knows. Except the developers.

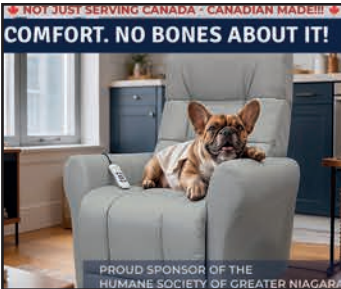
The storms helped us face facts. A massive assault on the sewer system should have been disclosed — before the toilets burped, sump pumps were overcome and basements filled.

Similarly, heritage rules we all must obey should have been followed, not cast aside. Nobody on council should have voted for either project without demanding to see how they look. Their impact on our town. Residents and citizens deserve transparency. Better leaders.

The morning after the big storm our lord mayor and his deputy posted a video of concern: “We’re here to help,” they said.

Too late.

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister. garth@garth.ca



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Turner needs to step in and run again

Dear editor:
When I read Garth Turner's July 23 column, "Who can save NOTL from political grift?" I was shocked by his quick résumé of his political career and his conclusion that he was a failure federally and would not make a good municipal politician.

What self-deprecating poppycock.

Garth worked for years in the heavyweight division of politics — the gladiatorial federal arena. He was elected as a federal member of Parliament in 1988, served as minister of national revenue and was elected again in 2006.

He also worked for The Globe and Mail, Metroland Publishing, the Toronto Sun, Baton Broadcasting, Thomson Newspapers and CTV. He helped launch Maclean's as a newsweekly and wrote bestselling books on real estate and personal finance. That career would be the envy of most Canadians.

Garth refused to kneel before Stephen Harper, showing political backbone, a critical eye and a



Gienek Ksiazkiewicz says Garth Turner should run for office in NOTL, or risk having worse candidates lead us. FILE

willingness to sacrifice his career for his principles. Refusing a plum job in exchange for silence does not make him a political failure. It makes him someone NOTL needs at the municipal level.

Brian Marshall labelled councillors who voted as a block in support of Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's unwanted development agenda the "Gang of Five": Zalepa, Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens and councillors Wendy Cheropita, Adriana Vizzari and Maria Mavridis.

Many residents see council's decision-making as incoherent and lacking transparency or justification. They feel valid concerns have been ignored while Old Town's historic appeal, NOTL's value as a destination and personal property values have been harmed. Parts of town are becoming a Niagara Falls-Mississauga development hybrid.

You have to ask: Who do they really represent?

Garth is right that local politicians have the greatest impact on people's daily lives. That is precisely why he should participate in the next election. Bad politicians are elected by good people who do not vote — and by qualified people who refuse to run.

Even the usually docile NOTL Residents' Association recognizes the political grift, the sane-washing and the threat to democratic decision-making posed by strong mayor powers. If authority is increasingly concentrated in one person, we should elect a mayor who represents our common interests.

Yet where are the NOTL-RA's candidates? Who are they endorsing? So far, nobody.

Has the association lost its way? It was organized to oppose council's decision-making, but it now seems consumed by trench warfare over minutiae with town staff. Such wars of attrition usually end in stalemate, with no meaningful change.

The NOTLRA includes many intelligent, qualified people with valuable experience. What prevents them from recommending candidates, endorsing declared candidates or running themselves? Somebody, please turn on the lights.

Garth, you have an opportunity to make a major contribution to NOTL. Take it. As Plato wrote, "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors."

At the very least, endorse candidates you believe would serve the community well. Do not stand on the sidelines like the NOTLRA.

Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids

Tourism pushback in Spain an omen for NOTL

Dear editor:
Our tourist board and Chamber of Commerce's ever-increasing push towards attracting more tourists to NOTL should take note of the current crisis experienced in other countries worldwide.

Witness for example the

reporting and pictures in the Aug. 1 edition of the U.K.'s Daily Mail: "Europe's tourism invasion."

For the third year in a row, riot police have clashed with local tourist protesters in Majorca, Spain. In NOTL, for years, tourism has been at the

forefront of our elected officials' minds at the expense of our quality of life.

From March through October, I suspect a local residency survey of the overcrowded streets in Old Town would barely result in one per cent being locals.

I have reported previously that tourism will be the eventual downfall of our local culture. We are nearing, or past, the point of no return, yet more tourism is our number one priority.

Samuel A. Young
NOTL

Residents and business owners need post-flood help



The following letter was sent to Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Rob Flack. A copy was forwarded to The Lake Report for publication.

Dear Hon. Minister Flack,
On July 27, Niagara-on-the-Lake and many surrounding communities ex-

perienced extreme rainfall up to 146 millimetres within a five-hour period.

My office has been in regular contact with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and his staff, who are working to address resident concerns and tackle the high level of service calls due to this flood.

Residents have reached out to our office and local authorities reporting devastating floods in their homes, businesses, and local farms. While we do not yet have estimates of

the total damage across the community, we know that many residents are experiencing devastating financial consequences.

For this reason, I am calling for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide financial relief through the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians program. We have seen heartbreaking images of flooded basements, entire farmer's fields swept away, and businesses' inventories destroyed.

I appreciate your willing-

ness to discuss this matter with me, and your offer to brief my team and other officials on the program in the coming days. The province must act to protect the wellbeing of all affected residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding areas.

Please feel free to reach out to me and my office at any time to discuss this matter. It is of vital importance to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents.

Wayne Gates
MPP for Niagara Falls,
Fort Erie, and NOTL

RIDDLE ME THIS

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
Category: BICYCLES ON THE BIG SCREEN

Bicycles take flight thanks to the magical powers of a mysterious alien in this Spielberg flick.

Last issue category: EDIBLE IDIOMS
Clue: In a 1785 poem William Cowper referred to this as "the very spice of life" — spoken like a man who's never tried sriracha.
Answer: What is variety?
Answered first by: Margie Enns
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jane Morris, Bob Wheatley, Jeff Lake, Esther VanGorder, Jim Dandy, Donna Pearce, Catherine Clarke, Sheila Meloche, Lynda Collet, Samantha Pockele, Alison Engemann, Claudia Grimwood, Emma Balsas, Katie Reimer, Wade Durling
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Addressing **stormwater infrastructure** issues



Brian Marshall
Columnist

Between July 27 and Aug. 3, between 250 and 275 millimetres of rain fell on Niagara-on-the-Lake during two separate weather events.

During the first storm, flooding of farms and rural properties was extensive, roads were submerged by ponding water and the basements of many urban houses were flooded.

No sooner had the ponding surface water begun to noticeably subside — although the ground itself was still supersaturated — and basements begun to dry out than we were hit by another “100-year storm event.”

The flooding happened again, overwhelming for a second time the town’s aging, inadequate and poorly maintained stormwater management infrastructure.

The state of NOTL’s infrastructure is not a new

problem. For decades, the town has chronically underfunded the expansion and upkeep of that infrastructure.

Consider a 2021 report, OPS-21-012, by the town’s irrigation and drainage superintendent, Brett Ruck, in which he recommended hiring an engineering firm to “prepare a new engineer’s report for the Four Mile Creek municipal drain” and that the town move forward with “the extension and improvement of the Four Mile Creek municipal drain.”

Ruck observed that 16 new developments in the Four Mile Creek municipal drainage area were not encompassed by the 1996 engineer’s report that served as the town’s approval guidelines.

He pointed out, “Larger-scale developments, such as subdivisions with more land parcels, denser housing and road allowance, contribute to a more extensive change in land use. The increase in more impermeable surfaces and landscaping features, such as lawns, also significantly intensify the rate and volume of run-off in comparison to the original property.”

The report apparently gathered dust until sometime in 2024, when the



The culvert on King Street near the Legion was blocked by an obstruction Sunday, leading to water backing up and flooding nearby buildings. RICHARD HARLEY

incidence of flooding and pressure from farmers and other residents adversely affected by these events reached a fever pitch and “internal discussions” commenced.

Two-and-a-half years later, a recommendation based on this report is finally scheduled to come before town council at its Sept. 22, 2026 meeting.

Sadly, even if accepted by council next month, the completion of a new engineer’s report could take several more years.

But what is a 100-year storm event?

Contrary to what we may assume, the frequency of these storms has nothing to do with a 100-year interval. Rather, it is a storm event that has a one-in-100 chance of occurring in any given year.

In Niagara, a storm is classified as a 100-year storm if 101.6 millimetres, or four inches, of rain falls over a 12-hour period.

According to the Canadian Climate Institute, we can expect more of these storm events as a result of climate change.

Anabela Bonada, managing director of the University of Waterloo’s Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, states that a 1 C increase in air temperature results in the atmosphere holding up to eight per cent more moisture and that the water will fall over shorter periods when a storm occurs.

In short, 100-year storms

may become regular events.

That is not good news, but it is the reality we need to confront.

Given that correcting our infrastructure issues to meet the challenges of this new normal will take years and require the combined efforts — and money — of every level of government, what are a couple of short-term ideas our town might consider to partially mitigate the damage caused by these predicted storms?

Perhaps we could begin by following St. Catharines’ example and declaring a state of emergency, allowing the town to access provincial and federal funding. Those funds could then be used to immediately clean up the drainage ditch network and dredge our stormwater retention ponds, many of which are sadly overgrown and silted in, leaving their performance notably impaired.

Further, based on photographic records of the worst flooding locations, existing culverts that are damaged, undersized or blocked could be cleared or replaced.

Quite simply, while we cannot control the amount of rain we receive, potential damage can be reduced if we can manage even part of it.

What can you and I do to protect our property and that of our neighbours?

If you have a ditch on your property, make sure it is clear of any obstructions that might impede the flow of water. Check and clean your culverts — something most people neglect.

Ensure the water coming off your roof is directed away from the house and toward the ditch. Install a backwater valve on your sewer line.

If you have a sump pump, consider installing a larger reservoir and pump, along with a secondary backup, while ensuring the outflow runs directly into the ditch.

The list goes on. Email me for further options.

While the current council does not bear full responsibility for the sad state of our infrastructure, its decision to greenlight development applications that rely on the same inadequate and failing infrastructure must be called into question.

Our elected representatives have the opportunity to do the “right thing right,” but we shall see what they decide.

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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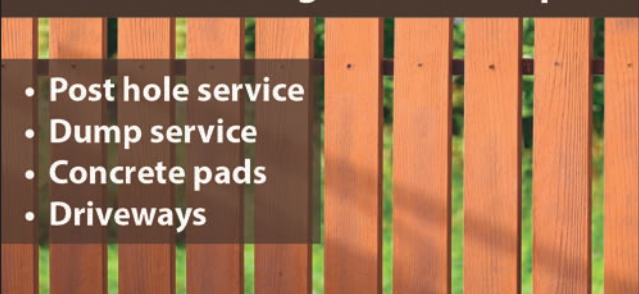
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Greetings from a **wetter-than-usual** NOTL



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

There is absolutely nothing funny about what has transpired, weatherwise, in north Niagara lately. But NOTLers are demonstrating so much resilience as we mop up after not one but two major precipitation events. And by the way, whatever happened to the simple words rain and rainstorm?

During my four years living in Montreal in the 1970s, I happened to come upon a little quebec town named Saint-Jean-sur-le-lac. It was near Mont Laurier, not too far from the well known ski mecca of Mont Tremblant in the Laurentians. Right on a lake, and just like our town now, it

seems that residents liked their town name. Quite fou-fou, wouldn't you agree?

Just imagine their surprise when many houses got damaged by high waves from the lake. Some houses situated right on the lake shore got flooded.

And in June 2013, we watched the television coverage of the brutal floods in southern Alberta. The Elbow and Bow rivers both overflowed, causing much damage in the foothills of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Way back when they named the town of High River, did the cartographer possess the power of prescience?

Please forgive me if I ramble, even more so than normal. My thoughts and sympathies are with every NOTLer affected by our recent inundations.

It was only 25 or so years ago, during our years living in Chautauqua, that many neighbourhood homes experienced water damage from a torrential and extended rain storm.

Town staff assured us it had been a "century storm" the severity of which would



Ross Robinson wonders why this portable toilet was so close to the newly paved Mary Street. ROSS ROBINSON

not occur again for a long, long time.

The irony was that this had been the second century storm within five years.

Everyone pulled together, and within a reasonable length of time, a very large underground water overflow surge tank was constructed under the William Street park. It's still there, serving its purpose. Who knew?

We can rest assured town council and our town staff led by chief administrator Nick Ruller are working overtime and proactively to mitigate the effects of our next major precipitation event. Big bucks. But with climate change guaranteed, "it's a matter of when, not if."

This weekly Ross's Ramblings has certainly been unique, and came from out of left field. But who will

ever forget the sight of the NEOB Lavender Farm on Niagara Stone Road out near the Airport? One day so beautiful — the next day, completely submerged. But I know they will be back.

And the ditches that usually drain the rural areas of our town. Suddenly filled with water. And I mean full of water. Often flooding right over the rural roads, the concessions and lines. Countless vineyards and fruit farms damaged so badly.

Our historic and picture perfect Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club has seen it all over the years. But who can recall such a shocking situation? Fairways and sandtraps under water. Oh, the sad sight of a golf course with no golfers golfing.

To lighten up as I ramble to a conclusion this week, full credit where full credit is due.

What the heck happened to Mary Street between Mississauga (or is it Mississagua?) Road and King Street? On June 12, I took a quick photo of a portable

toilet on the shoulder of the road, between Simcoe and Gate. A weird picture to take, but it was right on the shoulder, almost on a busy street.

Amateur scribblers like me must often think "out of the box."

Mary Street has been around a long time, and was due for paving, I suppose.

Three or four days later, I was on that section of this fairly busy street again, and to my shock and awe, it was an absolute showpiece. Fresh black asphalt and neatly trimmed shoulders.

And I kid you not, only a day or two later, all the lane markings, turning arrows, and bicycle lane markers were freshly painted. Truly a pristine street now.

Yes, full credit where full credit is due. Congratulations to the NOTL roads crew for such a professional project execution on Mary Street.

And let's all send positive karma to everyone affected by the recent rainstorms and flooding..

rossrocket9@gmail.com

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SOLD

This was truly a feel-good sale. I was honoured to apply the knowledge and skills gained through my recent Seniors Real Estate Specialist[®] designation while working with a devoted son living abroad to sell his parents' cherished home. Leaving a home filled with years of memories is never easy. With patience, compassion and a thoughtful approach, we achieved a quick and successful sale, allowing the entire family to move forward with confidence and embrace the next chapter of their lives. Helping families navigate important life transitions is one of the most rewarding parts of my work. Congratulations to everyone involved!

SOLD

It was incredibly fulfilling to help a son navigate the sale of his father's home following his recent passing. Since he had never sold a property before, he needed patience, compassion and clear guidance throughout each step of the process. During such a difficult time, I was honoured to make his journey a little easier and provide the support he needed. We were also delighted to find a wonderful couple who will now begin an exciting new chapter in their Niagara-on-the-Lake home. This was a meaningful sale for everyone involved—and a reminder that real estate is about so much more than a transaction.

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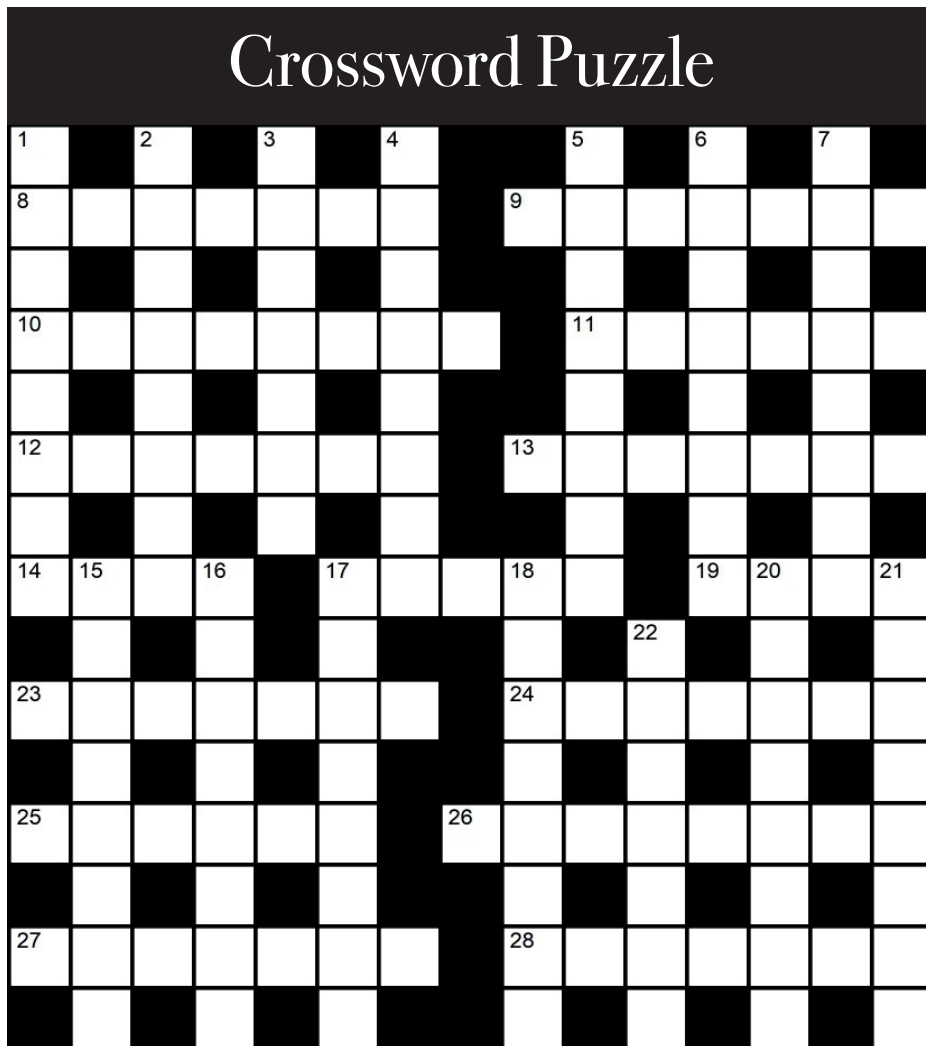


Have some fun

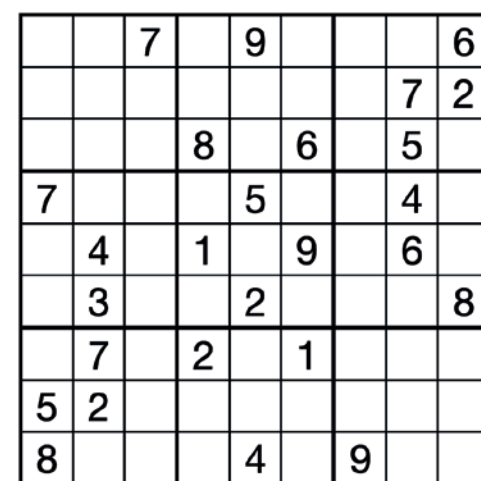
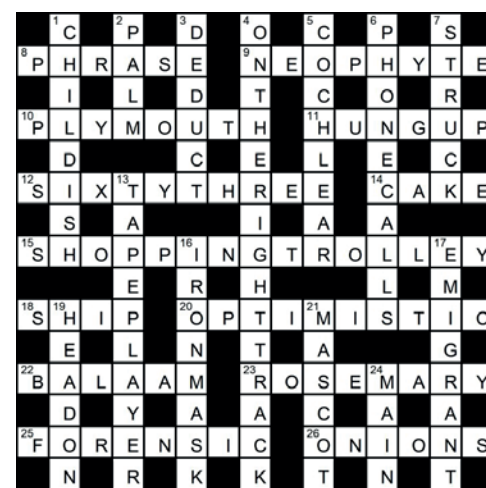
8. Track performer, perhaps (7)
9. Spock-like (7)
10. Squirmed (8)
11. Power source (6)
12. One responding to a stimulus (7)
13. More often than not (7)
14. Twitcher's cover (4)
15. Split or indentation (5)
19. Bridge section (4)
23. Vets (7)
24. Piccadilly hotel (3,4)
25. Drawn to end the game (6)
26. Spherical (8)
27. Missing a piece (7)
28. Passage (7)

1. Large pig (8)
2. Had Latin corrected in the Far East (8)
3. Agree it got made over in Surrey (7)
4. Recommendation (8)
5. Duke whose family name is Seymour (8)
6. Explanatory drawings (8)
7. Flowering garden tree (8)
15. Fomenting (8)
16. In perpetuity (8)
17. Ammunition case (8)
18. Road accident statistic (8)
20. Easy (8)
21. Jesus's childhood home (8)
22. Balkan native (7)

Crossword Puzzle



Last issue's answers



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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM

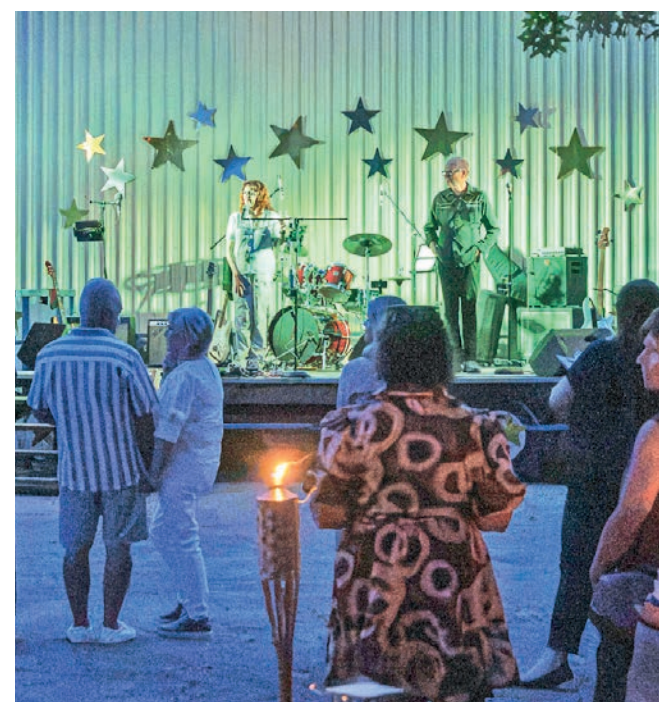


A really big fish

People have been fishing Lake Ontario and the Niagara River for as long as people have lived along these shores. The river, lake, and creeks once teemed with fish, providing food, supporting the local economy, and shaping a way of life for generations.

The surnames Allen, Ball, Boulton, Elliott, Reid, and Sherlock are just a few associated with Niagara-on-the-Lake's commercial fishing industry well into the 20th century. It was demanding work, with fishermen rising before dawn to set their nets and returning later to haul in the day's catch from spring until November.

In this photograph, local fishermen, including "Pud" Patterson and Goring Ball, proudly pose with an enormous lake trout hauled from the Niagara River.



Band in the barn supports museum

Cover band Gumbo Stew performs for supporters at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's Band in the Barn fundraiser Friday night at the historic Seeger farm. Guests enjoyed summer fare from PigOut Niagara and beer and wine donated by Bella Terra Vineyards, Konzelmann Estate Winery and the Exchange Brewery before dancing among some of Niagara's oldest Riesling and Chardonnay vines. The music carried through the fields as far as Wagg Road. DAVE VAN DE LAAR PHOTO

'Behold, I make all things new': Can we reverse aging?



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Biblically, the title refers to what God said in John's Revelations in the New Testament, but for this article refers to the current hype over rejuvenation of body parts, and possibly in the future, even whole bodies by science, funded by fabulously rich middle-aged men in high-tech industries determined to keep life's gig going much longer — at least for them.

How? By plowing many billions of dollars into rejuvenation research, recruiting some of the world's best scientists with generous financial incentives and supporting their work with equivalent resources, these champions of new-age industries hope to turn back the clock, and possibly reverse aging.

The names of some of the promoters and financial backers are familiar to readers: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos,

Rick Klausner, Peter Thiel, Yuri Milner, and Mark Zuckerberg, to name the leaders. So, no shortage of urgency, interest and cash.

The dream of reversing the arrow of aging isn't new and may go back as much as a 100,000 years, possibly longer, and would have required an awareness of the universal cycle shared by all living creatures — namely birth, development, maturation, decline and death.

Required too would have been considerable imagination and symbolic language skills sufficiently developed to share stories with one another about the meaning of life and death and possibly an afterlife in some form, as well as the possibility of supernatural forces and beings.

That seems to be the common template for most creation stories, myths and religions from ancient times to the present. But let's move on from minds many thousands of years ago up to the present to focus on what happens following fertilization of an egg cell.

The 2012 Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology was shared by two scientists: John Gurdon and Shinya Yamanaka. It highlights the scientific roots for rejuvenation.

Gurdon showed that a



Rejuvenation involves reversing the cumulative effects of aging on cells to a much younger stage when all those cells were much healthier. But is it possible?

nucleus taken from a fully differentiated epithelial cell from the gut of a tadpole, implanted into an egg cell, whose own nucleus had been destroyed, had all the information necessary for that egg cell to develop (i.e. differentiate) into a tadpole.

For his part, Yamanaka, showed that mature cells taken from an adult, could, in the presence of four transcription genes, be reverse-engineered to become pluripotent — that is, capable of differentiating into all the cells in the body, much as a fertilized egg can do.

What's going on here? What's so special about those transcription genes and how could the genetic clock of mature cells be returned — rejuvenated — back to stem cells capable of differentiating into all the cells in the body?

Obviously, there's more to DNA than meets the eye. Our DNA contains all the genetic information to become every type of specialized cell in the body, but doing so requires differentiation, a finely tuned process of progressively activating and suppressing specific genes on the path to becoming, for example, a certain type of nerve cell or heart cell, while silencing other genes required to make other types of cells.

That exquisitely orchestrated and timed process of selective gene activation and silencing is what makes the fertilized egg cell or reverse engineered cells so pluripotent and capable of differentiating into all the thousands of very different looking and behaving cells in the body.

How are genes silenced or activated? In the case of silencing, methyl tags are attached to selected genes or activated by exposing specific genes. DNA is packaged in a protein called histone which depending on its shape, can hide or expose (activate) certain genes.

Methyl tags and histones are nature's way of silencing and activating genes and the basis of epigenetics — changes by which genes are selected or suppressed and explains why all cells have more or less the same DNA but can look and behave so differently.

Aging muddles things. For one, mutations slowly accumulate in DNA, the result of copying errors when cells divide again and again. That's only part of the problem.

Other problems include shortening the ends of chromosomes — sometimes lopping off important genes in the process and probably most important for aging, are the accumulation of epigenetic errors.

Without epigenetic changes to differentiate different types of cells from one another properly, normal development wouldn't be possible. But epigenetic changes can go wrong.

Aging is associated with an accumulation of dysfunc-

tional epigenetics: too many methyl tags in the wrong place and changes in the way histones are wrapped around the DNA can change the effectiveness of genes associated with aging.

Too many accumulated epigenetic changes, hobbles cells and they can't function as well as they did decades before because of all the epigenetic baggage they've accumulated through chance and environmental stresses such as radiation from the sun in the case of the skin and eyes or chronic inflammation.

Readers can see where this is going. Rejuvenation involves reversing the cumulative effects of aging on cells to a much younger stage when all those cells were much healthier.

In a nutshell, that's what rejuvenation is all about: making old cells, old systems, old organs including our brains, young again. Or at least, that's the hyped hope.

Nest week, we'll have a look at how rejuvenation works in laboratories — or does it?

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

Cheese Secrets to **close** downtown shop after 17 years

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Whether it was cheddar, gouda, brie, gorgonzola or harvati, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Cheese Secrets was there seven days a week to offer up its curated selection of cheeses — by the wedge, wheel or board — to locals and visitors alike.

Now, the artisanal cheese store that occupies a small slice of Market Street in Old Town is closing up shop after being unable to keep up with the rising price of rent for businesses downtown.

Cheese Secrets's last day open will be Friday, Aug. 7. The shop opened at 38 Market St. in 2009 and has been run by the Allard family since 2018.

"It's sad that it's coming to an end," said Xavier Allard, head cheesemonger and operations director, adding that everyone involved feels lucky to have run the business for eight years.

He says the landlords who own the property wanted to renew the lease last month at an "outrageous" rent price.

"Other businesses have had the same or similar challenges in town," he said. "The landlords seem



Cheese Secrets cheesemonger Xavier Allard will be cooking up his last grilled cheese sandwiches at the store's Market Street location on Friday. The store is set to close — though he hopes it isn't the end of Cheese Secrets in NOTL. FILE

to not really care about the businesses that are part of Niagara-on-the-Lake, that make it what it is."

Annie Allard ran the business with Xavier, her son. She said they tried to negotiate a lower rent, which did not work. They told the landlords they wouldn't be able to pay the

new rate — Cheese Secrets would have to close. They were given an extra week to stay open.

"You can't work miracles," she said. "It takes money to make money and you run out when things are too expensive."

Xavier was there seven days a week, guiding cus-

tomers through the variety of Canadian-made and imported cheeses for sale, as well as running the show behind the scenes, hosting cheese tastings and offering catering services.

Alongside these features, Cheese Secrets had a monthly cheese tasting subscription service, called the Cheese

Club, and sold a curated package of cheeses, charcuterie and sandwiches that could be ordered ahead of time and picked up at the shop, called Picnic Experiences.

The best part of running the business, he said, was being a part of the community and getting to know his customers who came

back time and time again, whether it was NOTLers or visitors from outside of town returning because they remembered visiting and buying cheese from Cheese Secrets during their last trip to NOTL.

"Being a staple part of Niagara residents' traditions, the food that gathers them around the table is something I've been part of for eight years and [that] I'm so grateful for," he said.

"It's being able to provide and being the one behind those moments that bring family together and make Niagara what it is, which is having that wine and food culture, the beautiful landscape, the rich soil, and tying it in with food and cheese and providing my community with that."

Xavier said the family is going to take August to figure out what to do next with Cheese Secrets — they hope to have an update for everyone on the future of the business in September.

He wouldn't share details as to what he thinks the business may do next. It "most likely" won't be in Old Town, but they hope to stay in Niagara, he said.

zahraa@niagaranow.com

To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

Like many of you, my family and I have seen the impact of this week's heavy rainfall. It's been heartbreaking to see so many neighbours dealing with flooded basements and damaged homes.

We're doing our best to help as many families as we can.

If your basement has been affected, we're here to help with:

- Water damage repairs
- Basement restoration
- Waterproofing improvements
- Basement renovations once everything is dry

We're also happy to provide detailed estimates for your insurance company and work directly with your adjuster to help make the process as straightforward as possible.

♥ If you're unsure where to start, give me a call. Even if it's just for advice, I'm always happy to help.

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Vaughn Goettler for Lord Mayor

NOTL's Flooding: We MUST Do Better

Dear Fellow Residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake,

For the second time within a week in Niagara-on-the-Lake, our basements, our homes, our farms and fields were knee-deep in water, and in many places the power went out.

I know that our Town's staff and NOTL Hydro work crews are working hard to help. Thank you!

At the same time, it's clear: the leadership in our Town and Regional governments were not ready for this.

And they are still not doing enough now to help.

Why didn't we open the Community Centre immediately, around the clock, so people can clean up, shower, get together in a safe, sheltered place?

Why is the Town just getting around to control the invasive phragmites weeds that have been clogging up drainage — a problem that was identified as urgent nearly five years ago?

Why are still just talking now about cleaning up Four Mile Creek?

Why has our town consistently approved large developments without looking closely at how these developments affect our watersheds?

In the era of climate change, we need practical steps that will protect our homes, businesses, fields and farms. We need to take steps now for our community, not for some well-connected developers who literally don't do the groundwork.

We can't stop the weather, but we can start by being better prepared.

As Lord Mayor I will immediately institute an action plan, with deadlines, with the steps our Town will take immediately, together with you, so that we're ready.

We need better leadership. We need change. Leaders we can trust, whose decisions are transparent, who don't just wait for things to happen. Who work together with you.



Vaughn Goettler
August 3, 2026

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I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

IT'S BEEN A WILD FEW MONTHS.

At The Sykes Team we have had the privilege of helping over 60 families buy or sell a home in the last 90 days...and let me tell you, we've collected some unbelievable real estate stories along the way.

Some made us laugh.

Some nearly gave us a heart attack.

Some we'll never forget.

But it got me thinking...

I bet the people of NOTL have even better stories!

So I want to hear yours.

What's the craziest real estate experience you've ever had?

It can be good, bad, funny, unbelievable, frustrating... anything that makes for a great story.

Text or email me a few sentences. Next week, I'll pick a couple of my favourites (with your permission) and feature them right here in this newspaper.

I have a feeling this is going to be entertaining.



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